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Organization and Realization of Practical Teachings at the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Stip – Students' Views

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Abstract

One of the prerequisites that must be fulfilled in order to create quality work skills is to provide quality teaching (with quality theoretical and practical knowledge) within educational institutions. Preparation of quality educational staff requires preparation of study programs with rich theoretical and practical knowledge. The paper explores the views and opinions of students - future kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers (from first until fifth grade) and pedagogues at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Goce Delcev University in Stip, for the knowledge and skills they acquire during their practical classes. Students' views and opinions about the realization and quality of the practical teaching that they received, were perceived through the answers to the questions asked in the questionnaire which required them to determine the degree of knowledge gained, as well as the degree of satisfaction in the statements / questions offered. The results indicate that students are generally satisfied with the level of knowledge and experience that their professors transfer to them during the realization of pedagogical practice, but changes in the organization and realization of pedagogical practice may be introduced. It is important to emphasize the students' awareness of the importance and value of practical teaching and their positive attitude to greater attendance in kindergartens and schools, to monitor educational work and to become familiar with the organizational setting of these institutions. Students' views and opinions are an important voice, indicator and evaluator of the situation in higher education and they should be continuously consulted with one aim - to build quality study programs.

Keywords: practical training; future primary school teachers; kindergarten teachers; pedagogues.

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1. Introduction

The concern of society for the quality of the programs is growing in parallel with the changes occurring in higher education, with its increase and its diversity. In order to identify and apply good teaching practices, institutions need to implement evaluation mechanisms [2]. Students' views and opinions are one mechanism for evaluating the quality of higher education. In this paper we have considered the views and opinions of the students from the Faculty of Educational Sciences for the realization of practical teaching, with the aim of improving it in the future. Namely, the close cooperation between the teaching profession, schools and teacher education in all its diversity in certain systems of teacher education is one of the common requirements for high quality. In many countries in Europe and beyond, separation and fragmentation of these three components is characterized and treated as a possible factor that deprives their synergetic power [3]. In the countries (ours as well), of former Yugoslavia, as a result of nearly fifty years of common educational history a three-stage model of practical pedagogical training of future class teachers based on a partnership between university teachers of teaching methods and teachers in mentoring schools developed and still persists.

- First stage – students learn how to teach by observing the work of experienced teachers and they gain some experience under their immediate guidance - very similar to an apprentice when he/she learns the trade from his/her master.
- Second stage – students learn to teach through systematic practice of acquired skills and techniques for teaching, while the mentor and the "university teacher" or teaching assistant monitor student's performance and then give them feedback on their success
- Third stage - should provide reflectivity and it presupposes learning grounded on critical thinking about different approaches to teaching and learning. Such an approach is expected to contribute to a profound understanding of the processes of learning and teaching, and the student and the mentor have a role of co-researchers [3]. In our paper we focused our attention on the subject programs for pedagogical practice, i.e. there was no analysis of the methodical practice, neither on individual sub-jects in which we had practical instruction, nor on pedagogical internship. Analysis of the study programs (available web addresses) at some faculties in countries close to ours,: Preschool up-bringing and education, Primary school teaching and Pedagogy on Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tuzla; Education of teachers with English language on study program: Education of teachers (with modules: Croatian language, fine arts, informatics, educational sciences, joint program) on Faculty of Teacher, University of Zagreb; study program: Education of teachers and Education of kindergarten teachers on Teacher Education Faculty, University of Belgrade; and study program: Preschool education, Primary school education and Pedagogy on Faculty of Educational Sciences, Goe Delchev University, Stip, Macedonia, shows the presence of a separate course pro-gram for practical teaching. The workload of the students with this practical teaching, as well as the time period for its realization is shown in the following table:

Table 1: Practical teaching at the Faculties in our surrounding

• University	• Study Program	• Practical Teaching	• ECTS/ Year of Study
• University of Tuzla Faculty of Philosophy	• Preschool upbringing and education (2018/19)	• Preschool practice I	• 4 ECTS/ third semester/ mandatory
		• Preschool practice II	• 4 ECTS/ fourth semester/ mandatory
		• Preschool practice III	• 4 ECTS/ fifth semester/ mandatory
		• Preschool practice IV	• 4 ECTS/ sixth semester/ mandatory
	• Primary school teaching (2018/19)	• School Practice I	• 4 ECTS/ third semester/ mandatory
		• School practice II	• 4 ECTS/ fourth semester/ mandatory
		• School practice III	• 4 ECTS/ fifth semester/ mandatory
		• School practice IV	• 4 ECTS/ sixth semester/ mandatory
	• Pedagogy (2018/19)	• Pedagogical Practice I	• 5 ECTS/ fourth semester/ mandatory
		• Pedagogical practice II	• 5 ECTS/ fifth semester/ mandatory
• University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education	• Education of teachers with English language 2016/17	• Practice in teaching English 1	• 1 ECTS/ second year/ mandatory
		• Practice in teaching English 2	• 1 ECTS/ third year/ mandatory
		• Practice in teaching English 3	• 1 ECTS/ third year/ mandatory
		• Practice in teaching English 4	• 2 ECTS/ fourth year/ mandatory
		• Practice in teaching English 5	• 2 ECTS/ fourth year/ mandatory
	• Education of teachers (with modules: Croatian language, fine arts, informatics, educational sciences, joint program)	• Professional Pedagogical practice 1 (modules joint program)	• / first year
		• Professional Pedagogical practice 2 (modules joint program)	• / second year

		program and educational sciences)	
		• Professional Pedagogical practice 3 (modules joint program)	• / third year
		• Professional Pedagogical practice 4 (modules joint program and educational sciences)	• / fourth year
	• Undergraduate university studies (Early and preschool upbringing and education)	• Professional Pedagogical practice 1	• 2 ECTS/ first year/ mandatory
		• Professional Pedagogical practice 2	• 4 ECTS/ second year/ mandatory
		• Professional Pedagogical practice 3	• 4 ECTS/ third year/ mandatory
• University of Belgrade Teacher Education Faculty	• Education of teachers	• Pedagogical – psychological practice	• 2 ECTS/ first year/ mandatory
		• Didactic practice	• 3 ECTS/ second year/ mandatory
		• Methodical practice I	• 4 ECTS/ third year/ mandatory
	• Education of kindergarten teachers	• Methodical practice II	• 7 ECTS/ fourth year/ mandatory
		• Pedagogical – psychological practice	• 3 ECTS/ first year/ mandatory
		• Didactic practice	• 3 ECTS/ second year/ mandatory
		• Methodical practice I	• 6 ECTS/ third year/ mandatory
		• Methodical Practice II	• 7 ECTS/ fourth year/ mandatory

Source:

- Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Tuzli, Bosna i Hercegovina, Syllabus Repozitorij Univerziteta u Tuzli <http://www.untz.ba/index.php?page=studij>;
- Sveučilište u Zagrebu Učiteljski fakultet, OPISI PREDMETA-SILABUSI REDA PREDAVANJA UČITELJSKOG FAKULTETA ZA AKADEMSKU GODINU 2016 /2017 UČITELJSKI STUDIJ (S ENGLISKIM ILI NJEMAČKIM JEZIKOM), <https://www.ufzg.unizg.hr/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Učiteljski-studij-s-engleskim-ili-njemačkim-jezikom-Program-835.pdf>;
- Sveučilište u Zagrebu Učiteljski fakultet, OPISI PREDMETA-SILABUSI REDA

PREDAVANJA UČITELJSKOG FAKULTETA ZA AKADEMSKU GODINU 2016./2017
UČITELJSKI STUDIJ (S MODULIMA) <https://www.ufzg.unizg.hr/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Uciteljski-studij-s-modulima-Program-903.pdf>,

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In the last 15 years, the practical teaching at the Faculty of Educational Sciences has been realized through different forms. In the period 2004-2012, the Practical Teaching in the curricula of the Primary School teaching and Preschool education was realized as a compulsory subject - Pedagogical practice. Changes have been observed in the number of credits (increasing the number of credits) and semesters when listening. From the school year 2004/2005 to the school year 2008/2009 [10] the subject pedagogical practice in the study programs: primary school teaching and pre-school education was realized from the third semester to the seventh semester and carries one credit. In the eighth semester students are required to complete a pedagogical internship at an appropriate institution (primary school, kindergarten) and it carries 1 ECTS. From the academic year 2008/2009 to 2010/2011, the subject pedagogical practice in the study program for primary school teachers was realized in the second, fourth and sixth semester and it carries 2 ECTS. In the eighth semester students are required to complete a pedagogical internship at the elementary school and earn 4 ECTS. With the new accreditations from the academic year 2008/2009 until 2010/2011 [11] the study program for preschool education is realized as three-year studies and the subject pedagogical practice is realized in first, third and fifth semester and brings 2 ECTS. In the sixth semester, students are required to complete a pedagogical internship in kindergarten and earn 4 ECTS. Based on the Law on Higher Education of 2010, a Rulebook on the Manner and Conditions for Organizing Students' Practical Teaching is prescribed.

Reference [9] according to which the practical training shall be conducted not less than 30 days, not less than one or more than eight hours per day, in an appropriate institution for practical training. The practical training is conducted under the supervision of a mentor from the higher education institution, and the student keeps a diary of daily activities during the practical training. From the 2017/18 school year [12] With the new accreditations of study programs in primary school teaching, preschool education and pedagogy, the practical training is compulsory realized in the second, fourth and sixth semester in the appropriate institution (kindergarten, primary school, high school, student dormitories) and it brings 2 ECTS. In the eighth semester students are required to complete a pedagogical internship and earn 4 ECTS. An overview of the placement of practical classes in study programs at the Faculty of Educational Sciences in recent years shows the tendency to increase the amount of student residency hours in institutions appropriate to supplement and upgrade their previously acquired theoretical knowledge and enrich the practical experience of organizational placement. the life and work of institutions dealing with educational work.

2. Materials and methods

The subject of this research are the views and opinions of students - future primary school teachers, educators and pedagogues, from the Faculty of Educational Sciences at Goce Delcev University in Stip, regarding the knowledge and skills they acquire during practical classes. The purpose of the research is to understand students' view of the way pedagogical practice is implemented and the opportunities it offers to link theoretically acquired knowledge to practical work and vice versa, how much experience gained through pedagogical practice helps them to master the knowledge from theoretical lectures. The sample is comprised of 65 full-time students from the Faculty of Education in Stip, UGD, who study in the field of: primary school teaching (30,8%), preschool education (40%) and pedagogy (29,2%). In terms of gender representation higher percentage (89,23%) of them are female, and the rest 9,23% are male.

Of the total number of respondents, 53% are second year of study and 47% are first year of study. For the purpose of the research, a survey questionnaire instrument was used, which was specifically designed for the purpose of this research.

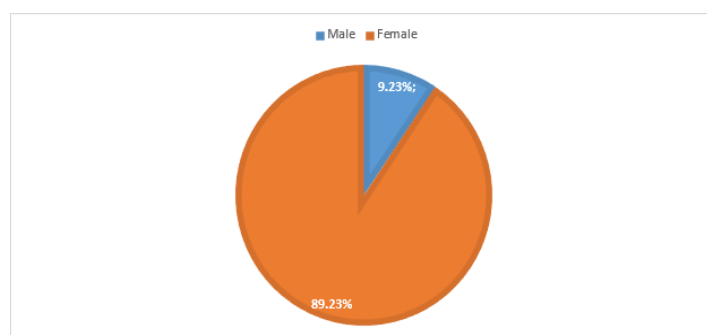


Figure 1: Respondents by gender

In addition to the baseline data (faculty, gender, course of study, year of study) it also contains closed-ended questions - an assessment scale where students determine the degree of knowledge gained, as well as the degree of satisfaction in the claims / questions offered. The obtained results are analyzed and presented using descriptive statistics: frequencies (f), percentages (%). The data obtained from the research were processed using the SPSS 19 statistical package.

3. Results and discussion

Practical teaching is an integral part of the education and vocational training of students - future teachers / pedagogues. Through her, students get the chance to identify and apply the acquired knowledge (from the fundamental pedagogical, psychological, sociological and philosophical disciplines) into practice. It is in this context that we asked the students for an opinion on whether the current way of implementing pedagogical practice enables them to gain practical knowledge in the field of pre-school / primary school institutionalized upbringing and education. Overall, most of them (59%) have a positive opinion and consider that the practical training greatly contributes to the acquisition of practical knowledge in the field of education in the

kindergartens and schools, and 41% of them responded that it is partially contributing. We asked the students to express their satisfaction with the level of knowledge and experience that their professors convey to them during the realization of their pedagogical practice. 69.23% of the respondents answered that they are satisfied and 21.54% that they are very satisfied.

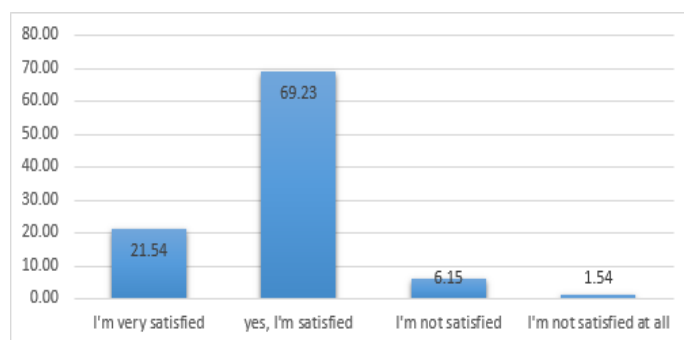


Figure 2: Satisfaction of the students with the level of knowledge and experiences that their professors transfer during the realization of the pedagogical practice

It may therefore be concluded that in addition to the presence of students in kindergartens and schools, it is important to work with staff who will motivate and encourage their theoretical knowledge to be able to relate to everyday practical educational work in the institutions that are visiting. In order to improve the organization and realization of the practical teaching of students at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, we asked them to indicate what could be changed in the organization and realization of the pedagogical practice. We have received a variety of responses that can certainly help to further plan the way that practical teaching can be better implemented. Namely, most people think that something can change: 24% of them think that the number of *hours of stay in institutions (kindergartens, schools) can be increased*, 21% think that it is necessary to give them *more opportunity to get involved in preschool / school life and work*, 15% find it necessary to give them *greater insight into pedagogical documentation and records*, there is a large proportion who feel that *there is no need to change anything*. The responses we receive are certainly a positive signal that students are interested in staying in kindergartens and schools and following the educational work and getting acquainted with the organizational setting of these institutions. Given the age of the students and the year of study, we are expected to receive these answers, and it is planned to be complemented with the planned activities within the subject programs for pedagogical practice, which will be realized in the following years of, study (third and fourth year). 71% of the respondents *are satisfied* with the knowledge they have gained during the Pedagogical practice regarding the organizational setting of the life and work of preschool / primary school institutions, and 19% of them said that they are *very satisfied*. It was also important for us to see the students' viewpoints on certain elements that they should be familiar with during the practical training as well, which arise from the requirements of the subject practical training program. For this purpose, they were offered multiple statements that they responded through a rating scale expressing their opinion through responses: I learned a lot, partially learned, was not mentioned during practice. Regarding the first statement: knowledge about the *organizational setting of the institution's life and work*, 64% of the students answered that they *had partially learned* and 28% of them *had learned a lot*. Positive answers were also given to the statement: introduction to *the institution's*

annual work program, to which 58% of respondents said *they had learned a great deal*, while 35% said they had *partially learned*. 45% of the students said that they were *partially familiar* with the management work in the institution, while 31% of them said that they *had learned a lot*. In order to successfully organize and implement the educational work of an institution, besides the teaching staff, it is important to mention the role of the teaching staff: pedagogue, psychologist, speech therapist, special educator, social worker, as well as the work of the medical staff in the preschools. Therefore, the program envisages students to get acquainted with the job responsibilities and duties of each of these professions. In terms of familiarity with the *work of the pedagogue* in the institution, a large percentage of students (51%) responded that they had *learned a lot*, and the rest said that they had *partially learned*. Positive answers were also received regarding the familiarity with the work of the *psychologist in the institution* (50% *learned a lot* and the rest *partial learned*). 57% *learned a lot* about the work of the *speech therapist* at the institution, 31% *partially learned*, and 12% answered in the negative. 53% *learned a lot* about the work of the *special educator* in the institution, 31% *partially learned*, and the rest answered no. 47% of the students *partially learned* about the work of the *social worker* in the institution, and 33% of them *learned a lot*. Most of the students (45%) responded that they had *learned a lot* about the work of the *medical staff* at the institution (kindergarten), and 36% responded that they had *partially learned*, and the rest answered negatively. 54% of the students responded that they had *partially learned* about the *mandatory pedagogical documentation and records* kept at the educational institution they attended during the practical training, and 36% of them answered that they had *learned a lot*. Regarding the statement about getting acquainted with the *public and cultural activity of the institution*, 66% responded that they had *partially learned* and 28% that they had *learned a lot*. Lastly, we asked students for an opinion on how much they were familiar with the *planning process in the educational institutions* they visited, to which 50% responded that they had *partially learned* and 46% that they had *learned a lot*.

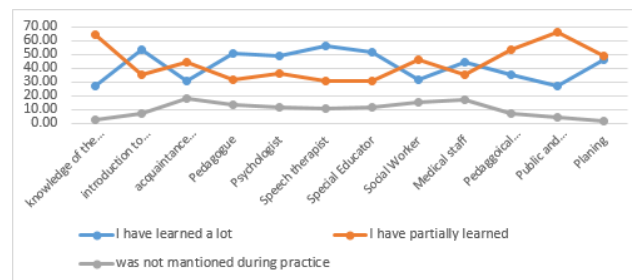


Figure 3: Students' viewpoints on certain elements that they should be familiar with during the practical training

From the answers to the offered statements we can conclude that in general the students have acquired knowledge about the organizational set-up, the work of the professional services, the preparation of the annual programs, the management of pedagogical documentation and so on. in preschools and schools that can be a good basis for deepening knowledge and improving the skills that they later acquire through other methodological subjects in order to be able to successfully enter the world of their future teaching profession. Linking theoretical knowledge with practical experience is one of the goals of modern and successful teaching. Therefore, we asked the students for their opinion whether their theoretical knowledge was in function of the realization of the pedagogical practice, to which 90% of them answered *positively*, and a small part of them (7%) did *not notice any change*. For the question: *How satisfied are you with the knowledge you gained during*

your pedagogical practice? 63% of the students surveyed answered that they are satisfied, 26% of them are very satisfied, and the remaining 9% are not satisfied.

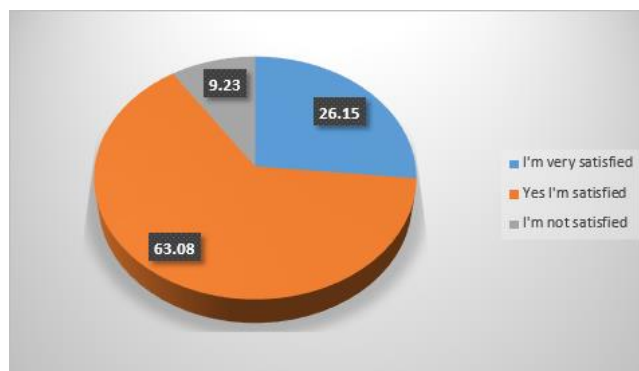


Figure 4: Students level of satisfaction with the gained knowledge during their pedagogical practice

Working in a team, improves socialization in a team, strengthens friendships within the group and certainly contributes to better results. To that end, we asked students for their opinion on whether pedagogical practice helped them *improve and strengthen group collaboration*. 87% of the students answered positively to this question, 1% answered negatively, and 12% of us answered that they did not notice any change.

4. Conclusion

Practical teaching at the faculties helps students to better understand the issues they are learning in theory, to be able to relate theory to real-world situations in the work-place, to be able to work in a team, and to develop personal qualities, abilities and skills that will help them better adapt to the profession they are preparing for. The results obtained confirm this, with the majority of surveyed students believing that practical teaching contributes to the acquisition of practical knowledge in the field of education in kindergartens and schools. It is also significant the positive attitude of the students for their greater presence in the kindergartens and schools, to attend the educational work and to get acquainted with the organizational structure of these institutions. Simultaneously important to us was the opinion of students concerning the requirement that, despite their presence in kindergartens and schools, it is important to be under the supervision of the staff, which motivates and encourage their theoretical knowledge to know how to connect with everyday practical educational work in the institutions that they are visiting. Students' views and opinions are important evaluators and roadmaps that show where to respond and in which segment to make changes. Their pointers, help us work on creating better study and subject pro-grams It is inevitable that there will be some weaknesses in the realization of certain subject syllabuses, but it is important to constantly work to overcome weaknesses that may not always be foreseen, especially when it comes to the syllabus of practical teaching, the realization of which is conditioned by more sides.

5. Recommendation

Building quality teachers, educators and pedagogues cannot be reduced to their theoretical, institutional

preparation alone. Quality practical teaching is an integral part of the whole process. Practical training of future educators requires good inter-institutional cooperation. This paper aims to show the level at which practical training of future teachers, educators and pedagogues is realized, pointing the strengths that exist and can be a good guide for other institutions involved in the preparation of teaching staff. At the same time, the paper gives an overview of the possible weaknesses that occur in the implementation of the practical training, the weaknesses and gives the opportunity to react and improve them. At the same time, the contribution of the students is respected as they are direct participants in this process and they can give a true picture of the situation from the inside.

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